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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT — Friday, September 23, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MUSIC ON THE BUDGET." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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"Music has charms to soothe a savage breast,
To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak."

I know you've probably heard those two famous lines again and again. For they've been quoted a lot since William Congreve wrote them sometime along in the seventeenth century. I happened to think of them the other day as I was reading over a report of the number of radios, phonographs, and pianos in homes all over the United States.

This report was just one of several that I was reading. Another one told something of the money American families spent for doctor bills and for medicine. And still another was a report of money spent on the family automobile.

All of these reports that I'm speaking of were put out by the Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture. This bureau got the real facts and figures by making door-to-door interviews with members of representative families--in villages and farms all over the country.

Today, I'm going to pick out just a few of the interesting facts that I found in these reports and pass them on to you.

First as I was saying in the beginning, one of these releases had to do with radios--and phonographs--and pianos. Well, according to the study radios are far more popular than either phonographs or pianos--both in villages and on farms.

And now--just to narrow down the radio figures a little more. Radios seemed to be more popular in villages than on farms. Anyway at least three out of every four families interviewed in villages had a radio. Sometimes even the fourth family did. Or in cold percentage figures--well over three-fourths of the village families had radios.

On the farms, in most sections reporting, at least half the families had radios. One of the most interesting things to me about this farm report was the difference in the number of radios in farms in different sections of the country.

For instance, take ten farming areas in the North Central states. In one of these ten areas nearly every family owned a radio. In another, just about half of the families had radios. And the other eight farming areas were someplace in between.

And here's at least part of the explanation for some of the big differences in radio ownership on farms. The study showed that these differences were closely related to how available electricity was in each particular neighborhood. It seemed that a power line nearby was as big an influence in getting the family to buy a radio as was love of music or interest in politics.

Phonographs were a little different story. Here the farms won over the villages. At least one out of every four farm families interviewed had a phonograph. But no village in any part of the country came up to that percentage.

And as for the piano--well apparently there are still a lot of boys and girls doing the G-scale and finger limbering exercises. For about one out of every four families in villages owned pianos. Farms ranked even higher.

There, that's enough about music. It looks as though there are enough radios, and pianos, and phonographs the country over to give music a fair chance to "exert its charms".

But here's a note from another report that doesn't sound so good--about the money families spend for doctor bills and medicine. These figures were taken from families in small midwestern towns.

Judging from them, many families economized on health. And when families had to economize on health they cut down first on visits to the oculist. Next, they were most likely to neglect the dentist. Then, if they had to cut financial corners even more, they didn't go to the family physician--just bought medicine and treated themselves.

In families that had very little money to spend at all, the money spent on doctor bills and medicine was obviously not enough to pay for adequate medical attention. There wasn't enough spent to get routine physical examinations by a physician. And there certainly wasn't money for a dental check-up for all the family even once a year.

And now to jump from health to transportation, here's an interesting fact about the family automobile. I found this in a report of the money spent on gasoline and other automobile supplies in cities--villages--and farm counties in the North Central part of the United States.

According to these figures there is a definite tie-up between the family income and the money spent on the automobile. For it was almost a general rule that "the more the family income was, the more mileage there was on the family machine."

I haven't time to tell you more today. But I may have other news of interest for you on another day. For this study of Consumer Purchases carried on by the Bureau of Home Economics is constantly turning up something interesting--about the way the families the country over spend their money. And they have figures for food--lodging--and clothing as well as the ones I have mentioned today--music--health--and the family automobile.

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